



# Technology Tips for Second Language Classrooms

## Generic Tips and Ideas

1. Consider the fact that a lot of **technology surrounds you in your classes**. You may be using and integrating a lot of different technologies already in your everyday classes.



2. Begin with technologies that you **feel comfortable** using. An overhead projector is a technology that just needs a little bit of spice to support your teaching moments.

3. Invest a few dollars in **colored transparencies**. Making your own transparencies off a computer page is less expensive than you think and you can make it to suit your classes and your teaching.

4. Use **blank transparencies** to have your students participate in activities where they can complete worksheets and then present them to the rest of the class.

5. **Invest in a digital camera**—not only for still pictures but also for short video-clips. Then save your shots and put them together in simple programs such as Word or PPT.



6. When **using the Internet** for cultural explorations or research, prepare simple pages with sites you have visited and can recommend for your language students. Though you will have to do a little bit of work in advance, it will pay off during classroom time—tell your students that the search should take place through the sites you have listed for them.

7. Consider **creating your own worksheets** using programs such as Word and PPT and use lots of clip art (free graphics) to visualize practically everything you can say and teach in your target language.

8. Almost all students have a **free e-mail account**—create activities where students must e-mail each other in the target language and have them “cc” you to see how their communications take place.

9. To spice up things and make the e-mail exchanges more interesting, give your students **secret identities** and ask them to find out about each other by writing to each other and asking questions in their target language.

10. If your school allows you to download free clean programs such as **Skype.com** take advantage of the services of live audio-chats. With two or more computers accessible at the same time and a set of headphones and microphones your students could be working like in a language lab. Free and easy to manage, they could be engaged in discovery types of oral-based activities with each other.

11. With a little bit of more work in advance, you could have your students **chat in live situations with** practically the rest of the world. Think of how good such experiences would be for them to use their target language to really communicate with other students in the world.

12. **Enlist yourself in list-serv e-mails** from language education websites that allow you to always be notified of the latest resources available on the net.

13. **Find out what technology expertise your students have** and use them for special projects. You may have students with video-camera skills, students who have a special eye for desktop publishing projects. Combine their skills together and create classroom materials to enhance



your classes.

14. **Generic teacher sites** are also a good source for activities in second language classes. Think of places that offer free tools like word-puzzle makers, crosswords, simple matching games, even flash card creators. Just input the information in the target language and save your file for future changes.



15. If your school has the possibility of **sharing digital folders** with students and teachers, save special presentation files and documents for your students to access before and after your lessons. This type of flexibility really helps students who are absent or who need to check on your lessons a little bit longer than the rest of the class.

16. Using technology to **create evaluation activities** allows you to make slight changes to your matrices. The changes help you adapt the exams over the years and offer second chances to students who may have not done as well in their first try.

17. More skilled teachers can consider using web-space from their school sites to **create simple web pages** of their classroom, where links and files can be stored for students and parents to access outside of school time. Free Blogs are also a simple way of beginning the journey of web-designing (try [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)).

18. **Access fantastic language resources** (currently available in French, Spanish, Ukrainian and German) from [LearnAlberta.ca](http://LearnAlberta.ca).

19. Use **national and provincial sites on weather**, news and entertainment to engage students in daily routines (access a weather site and ask students, in turn, to visit the page every other day in the target language and briefly share with the class the weather forecast.)

20. If you have access to **target language films**, advertising and video-clips, use them in your classes in a variety of ways. If you have movies with subtitles in the TL, show them with or without the subtitles. Use a sample scene and show it in the “mute” mode first. Ask students to guess what the conversation may be about. Then play the same scene again, this time with no visual. Play the same scene the third time around and see how much understanding takes place. One simple example of the use of a wide-spread technology that we all can use. If you do not have access to videos in your TL, consider carrying out the same activity with an English video sample. Ask your students to dub the scene while playing.

21. Use **LCD projectors** (or the classroom TV) to show your students interesting sites on the net. If you have a limited access to a projector and end up having to book it several times over the year consider this: if you can prove that you use the tool often enough and in effective ways the administrators in your school may consider getting your very own tool for your classes in the next school year!

22. A **CD player is a good inexpensive piece of technology** which can also help you make your classes more exciting. Play short song games such as “complete the song”, where your students listen to a song in the TL once and then you play a short piece of it and then stop, while they have to finish the sentence of the song. Or use songs in the TL that they know well and ask them to sing along.



23. Anything that can be **printed** should not be handwritten: most students prefer accessing materials that are clearly printed and easy to read.

24. Sure: making your own worksheets in a computer program may **take longer** in the beginning. But consider how little time it takes to update and make changes on a digital file instead of rewriting something or cut and pasting (with scissors and glue!)

Now **turn the page** and read more program specific tips and ideas to use technology in your SL classes!



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## Program Tips and Ideas

1. Microsoft Office programs are available to all students and teachers in Alberta. The basic suite offers programs such as Word, PowerPoint, Excel and Publisher. Your should really familiarize yourself with all of them. They could be your best resource ever in your SL classes.
2. Consider taking generic professional development sessions in these simple programs and open the doors to a vast number of possibilities.
3. If your intent is to create simple worksheets with a great deal of text consider using a Word processor. Titles, different background colors and the use of tables can enhance even the plainest worksheet: in a matter of minutes you can set up an interesting page with key concepts for your students. Consider adding a lot of clipart (free at Microsoft.com). A few more tips for worksheets include: change the direction of your page (landscape instead of portrait, use charts even for your evaluation activities and lay out your questions in a less formal way.
4. If your print-based activities require a greater amount of visual than text, consider Power Point as your best and quickest way to create them. The print options in power point allow you to create flash cards in an instant; you can make pretend-movie theatre tickets or beautiful posters. Create your grammar reference charts, print them on colorful transparencies and create handouts for your students all in one presentation!



9. Charts are also very easily created in Excel and they can be used to support classroom surveys in the TL. With some clip art appealing worksheets can be made and saved and, as usual, easily updated over the years.
10. Any of the programs mentioned in this handout allow you to print your own materials (making transparencies remains my favourite default!).
11. Invest a few dollars in over the counter clip art programs—once you have accessed at least all the free clip art from Microsoft (the quickest and most ad-free site for visuals).
12. Greeting card programs are also a very nice investment—any program that allows the user to input information into pre-determined professionally looking templates, will let you use your own TL to do so. In minutes your students can create nice birthday cards, invitation cards and much more in your TL.



The most amazing shortcut on your computer:

*Whenever you see something really nice on your computer (from any website) you can literally take a picture of it at any point in time and add that picture in your digital file (word or PPT). Here is how:*

1. Have your active screen on.
2. Click Ctrl+Alt+ Print Screen at once
3. Open your file program (word for example) and right click
4. Choose Paste and the picture of the original screen will show in your program.
5. Now cut the picture and resize it.
6. With this single tip you can literally visualize anything in your TL classes. I hope you will try it out soon!



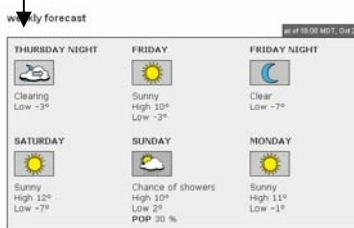
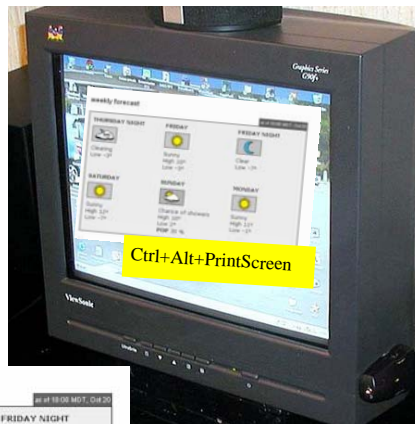
For example, you could try to explain a natural gender difference in your language by using images and text (even supported by short audio clips) with animations that demonstrate how the language behaves in each case.

6. If you can save your presentations and have your students access them on their own time, you can maximize the use of the program to be a continuation of your lessons beyond your class time.
7. For more sophisticated print-based resources and material, consider using Publisher, and adapt simple already made templates to create menus, flyers, programs and much more in your TL. Students really like the possibility of demonstrating their desktop publishing skills in your SL classes. And the templates allow you to create authentic materials in a variety of written text forms.
8. Consider using a program such as Excel to create a number of vocabulary lists. The data-sort tool in this program allows you to quickly order any number of words or structures in alphabetical order in a matter of seconds.



Website page

Cropped picture that can be used as a visual



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